

**City of Keene**  
**New Hampshire**

**HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE MEETING AGENDA**

Monday, February 7, 2022 at 5:00 PM  
Room 22 Upstairs, Recreation Center

- This meeting will be conducted in person and by using the online meeting platform, Zoom. The public may view the meeting online at [www.zoom.com](http://www.zoom.com) and click on “Join A Meeting” enter Meeting ID 867 3299 3658
- To listen to the meeting, please dial (646) 876-9923 and when prompted enter Meeting ID 867 3299 3658
- If you encounter issues accessing this meeting, please call (603) 757-1835 during the meeting

Members:

Dr. Dottie Morris  
Janis Manwaring  
Dr. Mohammed Saleh  
Sofia Cunha-Vasconcelos  
Dr. Shaun Filiault  
Ritu Budakoti, Alternate  
Marti Fiske  
Hunter Kirschner  
Rabbi Daniel Aronson  
Catherine Workman, City Councilor

Staff:

Andy Bohannon, PRF Director

Agenda:

1. Welcome and Call to Order
2. Chair Elections
3. Approval of January 3, 2022 Minutes
4. Finance Report
5. Racial Justice and Community Safety Committee Report
6. Committee Programs for 2022
  - a. MLK Day – Monday, January 17th
  - b. Holi Festival – Spring
  - c. Pride Month – May/June
  - d. Juneteenth – June 19th
  - e. Keene International Festival – September 24th
  - f. Indigenous People Day – October 10th
7. New, Other Business
  - a. 2022 Meeting Calendar
8. Adjourn – Next Meeting Monday, March 7, 2022 at 5:00 PM

1 City of Keene  
2 New Hampshire

3  
4  
5 HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE  
6 MEETING MINUTES  
7

Monday, January 3, 2022

5:00 PM

Room 22,  
Recreation Center

Members Present:

William Hay, Chair  
Councilor Jan Manwaring  
Dr. Dottie Morris  
Nancy Salwen  
Dr. Mohammed Saleh  
Sofia Cunha-Vasconcelos  
Dr. Shaun Filiault (remote)  
Marti Fiske, Ex-Officio

Staff Present:

Andy Bohannon, Parks, Recreation & Facilities  
Director

Members Not Present:

Ritu Budakoti, Alternate

8  
9  
10 **1) Welcome and Call to Order**

11  
12 Chair Hay called the meeting to order at 5:01 PM. Roll call was conducted. Dr. Filiault stated  
13 that he is home alone, participating remotely due to COVID-19 concerns. Mr. Bohannon stated  
14 that (soon-to-be-member) Hunter Kirschner is also participating remotely. He welcomed Rabbi  
15 Dan Aronson, also a soon-to-be member. Members welcomed Rabbi Dan Aronson and  
16 introduced themselves.

17  
18 **2) Approval of December 6, 2021 Minutes**

19  
20 Dr. Morris made a motion to approve the meeting minutes of December 6, 2021. Ms. Fiske  
21 seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

22  
23 **3) Finance Report**

24  
25 Mr. Bohannon explained, for the sake of the two new members, that this committee is different  
26 from some others because it has a budget. He continued that the funds shown in the Finance  
27 Report are due to the committee's fundraising in the past. He explained the report's categories  
28 and acronyms. He continued that the Keene International Festival (KIF) is a subcommittee of a

29 group that uses the HRC as a fiscal agent. The HRC currently has \$3,891.88. That is up to date  
30 from the previous meeting.

31

32 Dr. Morris made a motion to accept the Finance Report. Councilor Manwaring seconded the  
33 motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

34

35 **4) Racial Justice and Community Safety Committee Report**

36

37 Mr. Bohannon stated that in March 2020, the City created the Ad Hoc Racial Justice and  
38 Community Safety (RJCS) Committee, which created an in-depth, thorough report covering  
39 many subjects. He continued that members included Dr. Morris; Councilor Workman, who will  
40 be joining the HRC; and Dr. Saleh's daughter. A recommendation that came from that was for  
41 the HRC to continue the efforts of the RJCS Report, which the HRC has been doing. He has not  
42 yet spoken with the Mayor [regarding the statement the HRC drafted], but he will do that  
43 tomorrow. The HRC has started to tackle pieces of the Report but conversation is still  
44 encouraged about that. The HRC will need to figure out how to balance its work on this Report  
45 as well as all of the HRC's programs.

46

47 Dr. Morris stated that she thinks the Monadnock Region Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and  
48 Belonging Coalition (MDEIB) will be relying heavily on the HRC to be the events arm of the  
49 group. Ms. Cunha-Vasconcelos asked if that means the MDEIB would have funding to share  
50 with the HRC. Dr. Morris replied that the answer would probably be that they are fundraising.  
51 She continued that she is on the MDEIB but not its fundraising committee, which is fundraising  
52 specifically for the Diversity Officer position. Mr. Bohannon asked if the MDEIB has been  
53 meeting regularly. Dr. Morris replied that they meet on the third Monday of each month,  
54 previously at 8:00 AM but soon to be 7:00 AM. Meetings are virtual.

55

56 Chair Hay asked Dr. Morris her opinion about what in the RJCS Report is most actionable for  
57 the HRC. Dr. Morris replied that that is a good question. Chair Hay replied that he has read the  
58 report a few times but gets bogged down, because it is a lot. Dr. Saleh stated that they have  
59 mostly focused so far on the first section, Government Leadership. He continued that Section 3  
60 is off limits to the HRC, but there are Sections 2, 4, and 5 to look at. Ms. Cunha-Vasconcelos  
61 had recommended they make a spreadsheet because there are so many action items in each  
62 section and it is hard to figure it all out. He was going to try to create a spreadsheet that helps  
63 the HRC process the information more easily. Mr. Bohannon gave him a template, but he has  
64 not had time to do this yet; it is a lot. He welcomes others' input on what the action items could  
65 be.

66

67 Discussion ensued. Mr. Bohannon asked if there might be college students' who could be given  
68 the document to work with, and a template. Dr. Morris replied that the Keene State College  
69 (KSC) students will not be back until about Jan. 17; she does not know if the HRC wants to wait  
70 that long. Discussion continued about the logistics of engaging with college students. Dr.  
71 Morris stated that she will think more about it. Mr. Bohannon stated that Hunter Kirschner will

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72 also be joining this committee, and there may be someone in his realm who could help. He  
73 continued that he knows the plates of everyone at the table today are quite full. He will talk with  
74 Mr. Kirschner about the possibility of engaging students.  
75

76 Dr. Saleh stated that even without the spreadsheet, they could continue this conversation. Ms.  
77 Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that she sees value in continuing the conversation, because they have  
78 had to put it off for a few meetings. She continued that on the other hand, waiting to have a  
79 systematic approach appeals. Without that, they might waste time spinning their wheels.  
80

81 Mr. Bohannon stated that he will ask his administrative staff if they would be willing to take this  
82 on. He continued that it would probably be quicker than trying to work with students. The HRC  
83 agreed. Mr. Bohannon stated that he will have something ready for the HRC at the next meeting.  
84

85 Dr. Morris stated that Section 5, Education, might be out of the HRC's [realm]. She continued  
86 that it seems to her that at this point in time, the education community is really ready to do this  
87 type of work, in a way that they have not been in the past. The question is whether they have the  
88 resources, given that there are thousands of other things going on.  
89

90 Mr. Bohannon stated that he questions whether the education community can do this work, not  
91 because of the resources, but because of the new State Law: Right to Freedom from  
92 Discrimination in Public Workplaces and Education. Dr. Morris replied that that is a whole  
93 different story they could do some type of education on, because it is confusing to people and  
94 there is so much misinformation. School districts are trying to get clarity on this law. She  
95 continued that a lawyer came in to do some work with K-12 teachers (regarding this law), and  
96 there is a lot that educators can still do. She spoke more about what teachers are and are not  
97 allowed to say about race and racism, and how teachers can engage with students. Discussion  
98 continued.  
99

100 Councilor Manwaring stated that maybe the HRC could invite someone from Keene High School  
101 (KHS) to a meeting to talk about how the HRC could support KHS, such as with events the HRC  
102 does. Ms. Salwen asked Dr. Morris if the lawyer that she is talking about could meet with the  
103 HRC and someone from the Keene School District so they could all get educated together. Dr.  
104 Morris replied that some Keene teachers were a part of it already. She continued that she will try  
105 and have a contact of hers reach out to teachers who were a part of that, to tell them that the HRC  
106 would like to be supportive and invite them to an HRC meeting.  
107

108 Dr. Saleh stated that the RJCS Committee made seven recommendations in the Education  
109 category, and according to the report, the Superintendent was part of the conversation. He  
110 continued that it looks like some of the groundwork has already been done. The HRC probably  
111 needs the Superintendent to be part of this conversation about how to implement the  
112 recommendations. Ms. Cunha-Vasconcelos asked if he is saying that although it is not the  
113 HRC's responsibility to implement the Education recommendations, if the HRC is going to have  
114 the conversation about how to be a resource to the education community, the HRC should be

115 having that conversation with the Superintendent. Dr. Saleh replied that he thought that the HRC  
116 could help with implementation of every section other than Public Safety.

117  
118 Councilor Manwaring stated that she does not recommend they start with the Superintendent; he  
119 is too high up. She continued that they should start with people on the ground floor, such as the  
120 Principal. Others added or the school board, counselors, and so on and so forth. Councilor  
121 Manwaring stated that maybe they could get the schools to participate in HRC events, if they  
122 started with people on the ground floor.

123  
124 Ms. Cunha-Vasconcelos replied that she likes the idea in principle, but they have to approach  
125 this thoughtfully, because the HRC does not have any authority over people in the schools. The  
126 HRC is very strictly just offering support as a resource. Others agreed. Discussion continued  
127 about who to reach out to and how. Dr. Morris stated that it might be good to first offer support  
128 to the Superintendent and ask him who he would like the HRC to reach out to. Councilor  
129 Manwaring replied that they could have someone (who is connected to the Superintendent) talk  
130 to him for the HRC, instead of taking up the Superintendent's time, and do just what Dr. Morris  
131 is saying.

132  
133 Discussion continued about how to support Keene schools. Ms. Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that  
134 they had been talking about taking a "climate survey" for the City, and they could see if the  
135 schools are interested in having similar data. Maybe the HRC could assist or be a resource in  
136 that sense. Dr. Morris stated that the school district might already be working on some of these  
137 things. Councilor Manwaring replied that if the HRC can talk with some key people from KHS  
138 and/or Monadnock High School, they can ask those people how the HRC can support them,  
139 instead of trying to guess what the HRC thinks they need.

140  
141 Mr. Bohannon stated that he will reach out to Superintendent Malay and let him know the HRC  
142 has been having this ongoing conversation and would like to invite either himself or a  
143 representative of the school district to update the HRC on where they are and what they have  
144 done. He continued that he will say that the HRC is happy to offer support. He continued that  
145 he thinks it would be similar to when the HRC invited the Police Chief a couple years ago, when  
146 this conversation started, to give an overview. Then the HRC can gauge whether the schools are  
147 familiar with the Report and whether they have done something with it. Discussion ensued about  
148 the importance of approaching it in a way that does not make the Superintendent or others in the  
149 education community feel defensive, so that they can work together.

150

151 **5) Committee Programs for 2022**

152 **A) MLK Day – Monday, January 17**

153

154 Dr. Morris stated that they are all set but need to have a meeting. She continued that she  
155 contacted Karen Jennings, who is facilitating, and she (Ms. Jennings) will send some times that  
156 work for her and then she (Dr. Morris) will get the other panelists to join in. They are all on

157 board and looking forward to doing this. Once she gets that date for the meeting she will send it  
158 to the HRC, so others who are interested can join the meeting.

159  
160 Dr. Morris asked if it is correct that they cannot have a quorum present. Mr. Bohannon replied  
161 that it is okay if there is a quorum, since they will just be discussing an event. He asked Dr.  
162 Morris to send him the panelists' contact information. He continued that all HRC members,  
163 unless they tell him otherwise, will be "panelists" on the MLK Zoom, but not one of the panelists  
164 that Dr. Morris is talking about. He will put the event information out on social media  
165 tomorrow.

166  
167 Dr. Saleh asked if the event is open to all, since it is on Zoom. Mr. Bohannon replied that the  
168 Zoom can host 100 people. He continued that last year they had 65 people. Ms. Salwen asked if  
169 it will be streamed to Facebook, in case there is overflow. Mr. Bohannon replied that he will  
170 look into that. Dr. Morris stated that KSC is going to do a repeat presentation a week later,  
171 because the students will not be here for the MLK event. She continued that if people cannot get  
172 into the Zoom, they could be notified about that. Mr. Bohannon replied that the City will be  
173 recording it as well.

174  
175 Mr. Bohannon asked if Chair Hay could welcome people to the event and introduce Karen  
176 Jennings. Chair Hay replied yes, he would be glad to.

177

178 **B) Holi Festival – Spring**

179

180 Mr. Bohannon stated that he does not have an update. Rabbi Aronson asked what Holi Festival  
181 is, and Dr. Saleh explained that it is an Indian festival of colors, with dance and music, and the  
182 big attraction is that people throw color at each other. He continued that it is primarily an Indian  
183 festival but has become more of a cultural phenomenon. Councilor Manwaring asked if the  
184 Historical Society does this event. Mr. Bohannon replied that it is a partnership between the  
185 Historical Society, KSC, and the City. He continued that it started with KSC and grew. The  
186 COVID-19 pandemic prevented it from happening in 2020 but they still have the materials and  
187 will do it on the front lawn at the Rec Center this spring. He will check in with Ms. Budakoti  
188 and Jenna Carroll to see if they are still hosting it.

189

190 **C) Pride Month – May/June**

191

192 Mr. Bohannon stated that although it is not in the agenda packet, they have here a spreadsheet.  
193 He continued that Dr. Saleh had asked for a spreadsheet for the events, so he sent it to Dr. Saleh  
194 to see if it would be of interest to the group. He explained the layout of the spreadsheet to the  
195 committee. He continued that he thinks it will be helpful, especially for the Juneteenth event  
196 when there are multiple people and some costs associated. The HRC can use this spreadsheet if  
197 it is helpful, or it can be adapted. He can make it a monthly part of the agenda packet. HRC  
198 members thanked him.

199 Someone asked if Mr. Krischner wanted to work on the Pride Month event. Mr. Bohannon  
200 replied that Mr. Krischner is no longer present in the meeting. Dr. Morris stated that June is a  
201 busy month for Mr. Krischner but she could help with orientation.

202 Dr. Filiault stated that he volunteers himself and Mr. Kirschner to be co-chairs for the Pride  
203 Month subcommittee. Chair Hay asked if he has anything in mind yet. Dr. Filiault replied no,  
204 and it will be COVID-dependent. He continued that he would like to try and do something  
205 similar to what they were trying to do last year, as a block party on either the Rec Center lot or  
206 the parking lot of the Cheshire County building. Chair Hay asked about the film component. Dr.  
207 Filiault replied that it was difficult to coordinate with the Monadnock International Film Festival  
208 (MONIF), because they have their own thing going on. He continued that he would like to have  
209 something more visible to the public. Pride is typically an outdoor event like a block party.  
210 Hopefully by June that will be possible.

211 Ms. Salwen stated that she thinks Railroad Square would have better visibility. Dr. Filiault  
212 replied that it is up the air right now, but it would be an outdoor event in one of these public  
213 places in the city. He continued that he and Mr. Kirschner have connections at KSC and they  
214 will try and start working together on this.

215 Dr. Morris stated that the committee had been talking about the Pride flags going beyond the  
216 [businesses] and also being put on the [poles sponsored by] the Rotary Club. She continued that  
217 they had been talking about how there is a lot going on that month, including Juneteenth. They  
218 also talked about visiting Pride events in other communities. Ms. Fiske replied that she forgot to  
219 check in with Public Works Director Kürt Blomquist about the flags, but she will do that.

220

221 **D) Juneteenth – June 19**

222

223 Dr. Morris stated that Councilor Workman did a great job last year. Discussion ensued. Mr.  
224 Bohannon stated that he thinks this was one of the committee's better events. Councilor  
225 Manwaring stated that they should get together and plan. She continued that she can write a  
226 grant proposal to the Savings Bank of Walpole. She is willing to co-chair the subcommittee.  
227 Ms. Cunha-Vasconcelos stated that she will co-chair as well. Discussion continued, and the  
228 group determined that the action item for this month is to contact the people who worked on this  
229 last year and see if they want to do it again. Others are welcome to join. Councilor Manwaring  
230 stated that they also talked about meeting with the YMCA/Dan Smith to see if they can merge  
231 their efforts. Ms. Cunha-Vasconcelos replied that she would reach out to him, if she can get his  
232 contact information. Dr. Morris suggested they reach out to Gail Somers, too. Ms. Cunha-  
233 Vasconcelos replied yes, she was instrumental last year.

234

235 Discussion ensued about the costs/budget, and Mr. Bohannon stated that they should be able to  
236 do Juneteenth with \$1,500.

237

238 **E) Keene International Festival – September 24**

239

240 Mr. Bohannon stated that he works closely with Ms. Budakoti and others on this; it is a whole  
241 separate committee. He continued that he will keep the HRC posted.

242  
243 Chair Hay stated that last week he met with Becky Fields, who has done two photo books on  
244 immigration in NH. He continued that they met with Eric Swope from the Keene Immigrant and  
245 Refugee Partnership, and went to the Historical Society. Jenna Carroll loved the idea of bringing  
246 Becky Fields and her work here to hang, in conjunction with the KIF. The primary venue would  
247 be the Historical Society, but there is a possibility at KSC, and maybe a couple storefronts, like  
248 the International Market. He gave more information.

249  
250 Mr. Bohannon replied yes, the KIF is exploring this as a possibility – having a display at the KIF  
251 and at the Rec Center, like they did a few years ago. Chair Hay replied that if it does not work  
252 out to have it as a part of the event, it could be around the same time. Mr. Bohannon agreed. He  
253 continued that the Library was involved last time, too. Chair Hay spoke more about Becky  
254 Fields.

255  
256 **F) Indigenous People’s Day – October 10**

257  
258 Ms. Fiske stated that she would be happy to chair the subcommittee for this event. She  
259 continued that the Library could be a location and host for this. HRC members thanked her.  
260 Chair Hay stated that it would be great to have more for this event beyond just having a  
261 proclamation read in front of City Hall, and others agreed.

262  
263 Ms. Fiske asked if the HRC would be comfortable with having an event the day before, if they  
264 have trouble booking an event. For example, often you cannot get an Irish band on St. Patrick’s  
265 Day, but a band might be available a few days before. Others agreed that having an event a day  
266 or two before the date would be fine.

267  
268 Dr. Morris suggested connecting with Vicky Pittman, Director of Education and Community  
269 Engagement, at the Colonial Theater, because she is working on some projects for Indigenous  
270 People’s Day. She continued that she thinks Ms. Pittman would appreciate working with Ms.  
271 Fiske. Mr. Bohannon stated that Ms. Pittman is instrumental to the KIF and will possibly be  
272 bringing in a major drumming event for that. Discussion continued.

273  
274 **6) New, Other Business**

275 **A) 2022 Meeting Calendar**

276  
277 Mr. Bohannon stated that the proposed meeting schedule for the rest of the year is in the agenda  
278 packet. He continued that since the Fourth of July is a Monday, the HRC’s meeting will be July  
279 11 that month. Brief discussion ensued about the schedule.

280  
281 Ms. Fiske made a motion to accept the meeting schedule as proposed. Ms. Salwen seconded the  
282 motion, which passed by unanimous vote.



283

284 Dr. Saleh stated that today the HRC discussed Section 5, Education, of the RJCS Report. He  
285 asked if next month they will discuss Section 4, which they have not discussed yet. Having the  
286 spreadsheet will help, but having the kind of conversation they had today is also helpful.  
287 Discussion ensued, and Ms. Cunha-Vasconcelos suggested everyone's homework be to review  
288 Section 4 prior to the next meeting and be ready to talk about it. Others agreed.

289

290 Dr. Saleh stated that his second comment is that in looking at the HRC's events, he sees that the  
291 events support and promote certain marginalized members of society, but one thing they do not  
292 address is people with mental health challenges. He continued that he is not suggesting they add  
293 another event, but he wanted to bring that to everyone's attention. Mr. Bohannon stated that last  
294 July, the Youth Services Department's summer youth put on a community event, which he  
295 imagines they would do again this year, inviting all of the local mental health agencies. The  
296 event was for people to learn about the different agencies and to promote mental health  
297 awareness. There was a band, too. They did a good job, for 14- and 15-year-olds. There is a  
298 new Director in that department and he hopes this event happens again. If something already  
299 exists, he would let them roll with it, rather than taking on something new. He can report out to  
300 the HRC on whether this is still happening. He agrees with Dr. Saleh that mental health is  
301 important to address, especially during these times.

302

303 Dr. Saleh stated that he encourages everyone to think about what else falls into the category of  
304 "human rights" that the HRC should consider. Dr. Morris replied that Heidi Schwieger,  
305 Executive Director from the Jonathan Daniels Center for Social Responsibility (JDC), has been  
306 attending the HDC's meetings. Councilor Manwaring replied yes, Ms. Schwieger speaks  
307 frequently about the importance of including people with disabilities.

308

309 Ms. Cunha-Vasconcelos asked, regarding the definition of "human rights," if they should also be  
310 looking at issues like housing and health care. Dr. Saleh replied precisely, that is the kind of  
311 broad umbrella he was referring to. He continued that Dr. Morris wisely included this in the  
312 MLK event; "human rights" is a broader term for them to explore.

313

314 Discussion continued. Ms. Cunha-Vasconcelos suggested they get input from the public on what  
315 topics the HRC should be addressing. Dr. Morris suggested the HRC volunteer to do the climate  
316 survey. Ms. Cunha-Vasconcelos replied that they would have to consider the budget. Dr. Saleh  
317 asked about the HRC's charter. Could they ask the public, via Facebook, what they think the  
318 HRC should focus on? Mr. Bohannon replied that they would have to do that very carefully. He  
319 continued that he thinks it is possible, if well thought out and delivered in a way that might tag  
320 on to the HRC's existing events, so that people who are already coming to the events could  
321 respond to a survey about how the HRC is meeting the needs of the community and whether they  
322 have other ideas. Discussion continued. Dr. Saleh stated that these are public meetings but the  
323 public does not come. He continued that maybe they could have a comment box on the HRC's  
324 website. He is just thinking about how to gather people's input, so the HRC does not feel like an  
325 island. Dr. Morris suggested allowing people to submit anonymous, private comments, so that

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326 public comments are not met with negative comments in response. Ms. Salwen replied that if a  
327 Facebook post says “Send a private message” and has comments turned off, that could work.  
328 Ms. Fiske replied that there could be an email address for people to send comments to. She  
329 continued that with the City’s social media policy, if someone puts an inappropriate comment  
330 (on the Facebook page), there is a whole process to go through in order to delete that comment.  
331 Dr. Morris replied that she was not sure if they would be allowed to receive people’s comments  
332 in private like that, since it is a City thing. Ms. Fiske replied that it would be considered a survey  
333 in essay form instead of check-box form. Dr. Saleh suggested the whole committee have access  
334 to read the emails. Mr. Bohannon replied no, then they would be invoking a quorum. He  
335 continued that they would have to work through the details of this and the process. They may be  
336 able to go on the radio doing some campaign or maybe write a letter to the editor. If they want  
337 the public to be engaged, the HRC needs to reach out to them. They could also write a message  
338 on the website and promote the website. There are various ways of doing social media posts,  
339 such as through the Library, City, and Parks and Recreation. It will begin to get traction. Yes,  
340 they can start to ask the question Dr. Saleh brought up; it is a good question to ask.

341  
342 Discussion continued about Zoom and Facebook events, the Facebook algorithm, how to best  
343 reach people, and how to avoid bots, spam, and ill-intentioned people from joining.

344  
345 Dr. Saleh stated that today is the last meeting for Ms. Salwen before her membership term ends.  
346 Ms. Salwen replied that she did not think her term was ending so soon. Discussion ensued and  
347 Mr. Bohannon explained the Mayor’s process for appointing committee members and the term  
348 limits. He continued that Ms. Salwen is welcome to continue participating in the committee as a  
349 non-voting member. Discussion continued about the length of people’s terms. Chair Hay  
350 reflected on how he joined the committee and his experiences as Chair for the past six years. He  
351 stated that it has been an incredible pleasure, an honor, and a privilege. He continued that he will  
352 continue coming to meetings as a non-voting member [when his term expires]. HRC members  
353 thanked Chair Hay.

354  
355 Dr. Morris spoke about the “Tea Talks” that the Black Heritage Trail hosts and stated that she  
356 will send the information to Mr. Bohannon to send to the HRC members in case they want to  
357 attend.

358  
359 Rabbi Aronson stated that he is a part of the interfaith clergy team through the Monadnock  
360 Interfaith Project (MIP), so he will share the MLK event information with them. Mr. Bohannon  
361 replied that is fantastic, because that is where the event originated. He continued that they would  
362 love to have that partnership back at some point in time.

363  
364 **7) Adjournment – Next Meeting Monday, February 7, 2022 at 5:00 PM**

365  
366 There being no further business, Chair Hay adjourned the meeting at 6:28 PM.

HRC Meeting Minutes  
January 3, 2022

369 Respectfully submitted by,  
370 Britta Reida, Minute Taker  
371  
372 Reviewed and edited by,  
373 Andy Bohannon, Parks, Recreation and Facilities Director

7/1/19- 6/30/20	HRC	KIF	7/1/20- 6/30/21	HRC	KIF	7/1/21- 6/30/22	HRC	KIF
<b>Balance 7/1/19</b>	\$ 4,574.00	\$ -	<b>Balance 7/1/20</b>	\$ 4,096.73	\$ 3,411.00	<b>Balance 7/1/21</b>	\$ 3,391.88	\$ 2,541.89
	This was entered at 4574.70							
<b>Income</b>			<b>Income</b>			<b>Income</b>		
City of Keene	\$ 500.00		City of Keene	\$ 500.00		City of Keene	\$ 500.00	
Donations KIF		\$ 6,847.83	Donations KIF		\$ -	DONATIONS KIF		\$ 5,000.00
subtotal	\$ 500.00	\$ 6,847.83	subtotal	\$ 500.00	\$ -	subtotal	\$ 500.00	\$ 5,000.00
<b>Total Income</b>	\$ 500.00	\$ 6,847.83	<b>Total Income</b>	\$ 500.00	\$ -	<b>Total Income</b>	\$ 500.00	\$ 5,000.00
<b>Expenses</b>			<b>Expenses</b>			<b>Expenses</b>		
International Festival		\$ 3,436.83	International Festival		\$ 869.11	International Festival		\$ 5,500.57
			Pride Flags - 15	\$ 104.85		Pride Month	\$ -	
			Juneteenth Presenters \$200	\$ 800.00		Juneteenth	\$ -	
			Steve Schuch					
			Hadi Lanceric					
			Jonah Wheeler					
			Jalissa Rodriguez					
			Amina Jordan-Mendez	\$ 300.00				
Martin Luther King Day			Martin Luther King Day	\$ -		Martin Luther King Day	\$ -	
Peter Blood	\$ 500.00		Dr. Jim Waller					
KSC Dining	\$ 477.27							
<b>Total Expenses</b>	\$ 977.27	\$ 3,436.83	<b>Total Expenses</b>	\$ 1,204.85	\$ 869.11	<b>Total Expenses</b>	\$ -	\$ 5,500.57
<b>Net 19-20</b>	\$ (477.27)	\$ 3,411.00	<b>Net 20-21</b>	\$ (704.85)	\$ (869.11)	<b>Net 21-22</b>	\$ 500.00	\$ (500.57)
<b>Balance on hand</b>	\$ 4,096.73	\$ 3,411.00	<b>Balance on hand</b>	\$ 3,391.88	\$ 2,541.89	<b>Balance on hand</b>	\$ 3,891.88	\$ 2,041.32

City of Keene  
New Hampshire

# Racial Justice & Community Safety Committee Report

*March 18, 2021*

***Committee Members:***

Dr. Dottie Morris, Co-Chair  
Richard VanWickler, Co-Chair  
Catherine Workman, City Councilor  
Julia Atkins  
Tia Hockett  
Pierre Morton  
Eli Rivera, Sheriff  
Aditi Saleh  
Gail Somers

***City Staff:***

Rebecca Landry  
Shane Maxfield

## INTRODUCTION

As the nation witnesses acts of racism from unfair lack of access to resources and opportunities to brutal acts of violence against people of color, an examination of Keene, the community we call “home”, is important. It is essential to engage in sincere efforts to understand the lived experiences of people of color living and/or working in the community, to analyze systems, and to develop an effective and sustainable plan to address any concerns as key steps in creating an equitable and anti-racist community. The Ad Hoc Racial Justice and Community Safety Committee (the “Committee”) began meeting in July 2020 upon being charged with “developing recommendations to prevent or correct systemic and cultural inequities in Keene.”

Racism for many people in Keene is invisible while, for others, racism is present in their lives. The Committee held open forums during which people of color shared personal experiences in schools, in the workplace and in public settings that illustrated the realities of both blatant and implicit bias in our community. The City of Keene elected officials (in collaboration with others in business, education, law enforcement and others) have such an important responsibility to engage the greater community in stopping racism and bias; in moving toward equity, diversity and inclusion; in ending unfair treatment of people of color and making Keene a better place for all people.

This brief report serves to make recommendations that will both create a racial equity lens for the City, businesses, and individuals throughout the community and also build a foundation for what will, ideally, be beginning steps in a long-term, sustainable, and effective approach to advancing racial equity.

## THE PROCESS

### 1. Buckets

The Committee realized at the onset that the substantial and important work required would benefit if organized into key categories or bucket lists based on input received in the June 2020 public forum hosted by Mayor Hansel. The public provided comments in the forum that were grouped by the Committee along with members’ thoughts into the following “buckets”, and additional public forums were later held for each individual category.

- **Community Education and Schools**
  - Fairness and opportunity for all students, faculty and staff
  - Prevention of achievement and opportunity gaps
  - Strategic programs and curriculum that prevent implicit bias and that promote a culture of fairness
  - Multi-racial leadership development
- **Laws, Policy and Policing**
  - Advancement of racial equity
  - Development of policies that facilitate the integration of racial equity into decision-making
  - Identification of impacts desired of policy solutions
- **Social and Community Justice**
  - Implementation of tools to open racial equity discussions that lead to progressive change in the community
  - Identification of ways to change programs and practices that perpetuate implicit bias

### 2. Speakers

The Committee invited a number of guest speakers and subject matter experts with the intention of educating the committee and public on current practices and identifying opportunities. There were also

members of the SAU29 School Board, local teachers, City department heads and others who participated in the meetings.

- Steven Russo, Keene Police Chief  
Chief Russo reviewed the KPD use of force training and policy as well as KPD's Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA) accreditation.
- Elizabeth Dragon, Keene City Manager  
The City Manager reviewed City hiring and recruitment practices; the charge and activities of the City Human Rights Committee; the importance of the KPD's CALEA accreditation; the NH Commission on Law Enforcement, Accountability, Community and Transparency created in June 2020; and the KPD body camera trial program.
- Sheena Bice, Veteran and First Responder (VFR) Healthcare  
Ms. Bice provided a presentation overviewing the purpose of VFR Healthcare highlighting the high-risk, high-stress nature of first responder jobs and the importance of mental healthcare in this field.
- Robert Malay, Superintendent of Schools, NH SAU 29  
Superintendent Malay reviewed school curriculum, staff training and inclusionary opportunities; recent Keene School Board activities; and disciplinary data, policies and opportunities.

### 3. Public Forums

The Committee held three public forums in November and December 2020, one for each of the subject buckets identified herein. The Committee unanimously values the importance of public input in identifying the local Keene community's specific challenges and opportunities, and strongly recommends that the City provide ongoing opportunities for the public to provide input in a manner that is open and safe for members of our community. The input received was revealing and helpful, however, there is concern that more people might have participated if they felt their input had the potential to affect change and, importantly, if they were confident their input would not subject them to racist treatment or criticism resulting in negative outcomes.

## KEY OBSERVATIONS

There were common themes that became evident throughout the Committee's process of collecting information to form recommendations. Acceptance of these observations as truth is critical to the success of any actions taken to advance our community toward equity and inclusivity for black people, indigenous people and all people of color.

### 1. Racism Exists In Keene

Based on the lived experiences spoken by people of color in Keene, the Committee concludes that racism exists in Keene. The public is calling for community leaders to immediately take a clear anti-racism position by addressing systemic, cultural and individual manifestation of racism.

*"There are people of goodwill who haven't experienced racism. If it's not part of your everyday consciousness, there is a blindside. We often think that racism is about a person's behavior. Some people, we think, act in explicitly racist ways toward racial minorities. Those are the 'real' racists, we tell ourselves. But racism is not merely a function of individual attitudes, and it can't be eradicated by changing hearts and minds. Racism is the social, legal, political, and economic distinctions that mark and maintain unequal access and entry points to privacy, property, protection, prosperity, and*

*personhood. Racism is embedded in structures, institutions, and ideas, especially those about work, deservingness, representation, redistribution, and government's role."*

(source: [global.cornell.edu/themes/silence-racism](http://global.cornell.edu/themes/silence-racism))

The Committee received clear public testimony from members of the community who experience racist slurs, aloof comments about slavery, school curricula that are inadequate regarding the important experience and influence of black Americans, lack of anti-racism policy, fear of reprisal for any response to racist activity and lack of racial diversity in important services such as medical services, for example. These are just brief examples of the bigger picture of racism that plague many quiet American communities, and Keene is no exception. A recurring acknowledgement amongst both Committee members and the public is that there is a need for everyone to understand that everyone is harmed by racism. It will take our community as a whole to make changes that effectively improve equity and inclusivity for all people of color which will, in turn, make our community better for all.

## 2. Implicit Bias Must Be Identified

Many members of the Keene community have not experienced racism and, yet, may unintentionally perpetuate racial inequities, discrimination and biases. The purpose of identifying sources and practices of implicit bias is not to cause conflict, but to ultimately unearth unconscious bias and teach people and organizations to use a lens of equity in working together as a community to promote health and wellbeing for everyone. The creation of processes to "call in" each other (or organizations) into dialogue when addressing problematic and potentially harmful behaviors will help affect positive change.

## 3. Open Dialogue Requires Significant Expansion

In every meeting of the Committee, the need for open and ongoing dialogue was identified as paramount to achieving progress toward eliminating racial inequities and improving outcomes for all racial groups. The group considered the use of one-time surveys, regular climate surveys, citizen and stakeholder groups, student groups and other inclusive opportunities for open dialogue. The activity is community engagement, but the specific goal here is for victims of racial injustice to have safe and effective channels to share their personal experiences and ideas and for people who may have implicit biases to listen, learn and engage.

## 4. Community Education is Essential

The Committee received numerous ideas from members of the public highlighting the importance of community education. Ultimately, overcoming racial inequity and bias in Keene will require disrupting local complacency and expanding the knowledge base of everyone in the community. Educating citizens, organizations, leaders and community groups about the experience of people of color in our community as well as teaching how to identify implicit bias and adoption of newly embraced policies, procedures and practices rooted in the principles of equity are essential.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee makes the following recommendations to the City Council and to the community at large based upon information gleaned from its research, discussion and public input. Though this is the result of the work of a City committee, the recommendations will be most effective as adopted by an intended audience including all businesses, educational institutions and government agencies throughout Keene and the greater region. It is acknowledged that this will likely include some overlap and coordination with additional local and state initiatives focused on racial justice.



## 1. Government Leadership

- A. **It is recommended that the City of Keene take a position against racism starting with a strong anti-racist statement.** The Committee received multiple suggestions that the City Council issue a strong and clear public statement stating its anti-racist position and commitment to racial equity and inclusion. The public is looking to the City for leadership at a time when acts of racism around the nation are a cause for alarm and a call for change. In addition to issuing a statement, it is recommended that the City Council adopt a Council Goal specifically focused on achieving racial equity in Keene.
- B. **It is recommended that the City work with community stakeholders to establish clear community racial equity and inclusivity goals and that the goals be widely adopted by the City and Keene agencies and businesses.** This report is just the beginning of a process. Next steps will require identification of clear and measurable goals and accountability measures together with other organizations across the community as well as a plan for implementation and review of progress made over time. This process can only be successful if built upon information gathered in section 2 of this document, “Public Input and Community Education”, which aims to specifically identify the local challenges and biases to overcome.
- C. **It is recommended that the City continue its commitment and efforts toward racial justice and community safety whether via an existing committee such as the Human Rights Committee, a new equity and inclusion task force, or a joint effort of multiple community organizations and agencies.** Again, this report is just the beginning - just the first step. There is much work to be done and much motivation to make a difference. A strategic approach to moving Keene toward racial justice and inclusivity will require consistent effort, analysis and adjustment including regular follow-up on the recommendations in this report. There is also much data available that, when collected and analyzed, can help identify where and to what extent bias exists in our community. This data will help build awareness of the situation and emphasize the danger of complacency.
- D. **It is recommended that the City promote diversity in its boards and commissions membership and responsibilities.** Racial diversity amongst City committee members will provide important diverse perspectives that benefit the community and will help build sensitivity to and eliminate implicit bias over time. Committee charges and responsibilities should be evaluated to determine if they welcome diversity and provide realistic opportunities for inclusion.
- E. **It is recommended that the City promote festivals that celebrate racial diversity.** The International Festival and Martin Luther King, Jr. Breakfast are good examples of existing local celebrations that welcome and promote racial equity. Juneteenth, Holi Festival, Pride Celebrations, Cinco De Mayo, and other celebrations provide additional opportunities to appreciate diversity and to overcome stereotypes, build awareness and encourage unity.

## 2. Public Input & Community Education

- A. **It is recommended that the City, school systems (k-12-college) and community organizations and groups provide regular, safe and open opportunities for difficult conversations about local, personal racial justice experiences allowing input to be in-person or written, anonymous or personally identified.** The purpose of this effort must be specifically focused on welcoming and encouraging testimony from black people, indigenous people and people of color about their experience in Keene – including those who are reluctant to share or who may not trust that their input will improve racial equity in Keene. It is also of utmost importance that those who wish to share anonymously have the opportunity to and that they feel comfortable doing so.

There are members of the public who are reluctant to speak about their concerns. People have stories that they are not sharing. Personal conversations are needed to get tangible feedback, but being vulnerable and exposed is not comfortable. The committee did hear some testimonies and agreed that bringing these personal experiences to light will be necessary to disrupt local implicit bias and complacency, to build a broader awareness of the true extent of the problem in Keene. This will require multiple platforms such as anonymous surveys and strategic dialogue including public bodies and key stakeholders. There are two important objectives here: to provide a safe and welcome means for victims of racism to share their experiences without fear of negative consequences, and to engage those who do not experience racism in order to increase awareness of the existence and the consequences of silent racism.

- B. It is recommended that the City meet regularly with other businesses to share local observations and data and to develop, implement and measure organizational and community programs designed to 1) improve racial equity and inclusivity and 2) build public awareness of and knowledge to combat implicit bias.** Keene is not alone in its motivation to address racial inequity and to improve inclusivity. There are well established programs and standards that can establish key objectives and a framework for this work. Examples include the NH Governor's Advisory Council on Diversity and Inclusion, the New Hampshire Commission for Human Rights, the "Restorative Justice Vehicle for Dialogue, Organization For Chief Diversity Officers Tenets", and the "Race and Equity in New Hampshire Series", to name a few. Businesses engaged in this process should include the following, at minimum.

Government Agencies	Regional NAACP
Schools	Regional ACLU
Churches	Cohen Center For Holocaust and Genocide Studies
Healthcare Providers	Keene State College
Chamber of Commerce	Franklin Pierce University
Keene Family YMCA	Antioch University New England
Keene Police Department	River Valley Community College
Cheshire County Sheriff	Keene Public Library

This will likely require implicit bias training for the people involved, and meetings should be facilitated by a professional with racial equity experience and skillset.

- C. It is recommended that the services of local colleges and universities be engaged to conduct community racial equity and inclusion climate surveys every two years and that survey results and findings be shared with community leaders, the City Council, the general public, and organizations listed in section 2.B. for their education and response.** Racial equity climate surveys measure a community's – or an organization's – or a group's – level of adoption of a racial equity lens in its employment, programs and services. A regular effort is important to both increase people's receptivity and cooperation which yields better information and to assist in identification of specific needs and opportunities to advance racial equity.

In June of 2020, for example, Living Cities administered their fourth such annual climate survey and provides the following feedback which shows how helpful this approach can be in designing programs that address the specific needs of an organization or community.

*"In comparison from past years, we saw that staff were more willing and have more language to name tensions that they're holding as well as dissonances they are seeing within the*

*organization. Many of the dissonances named are a direct result of how adding elements of pro-Black culture without actively dismantling white supremacy culture is insufficient to grow an organizational culture that is pro-Black... Last year, staff reported deepened understanding of interpersonal, institutional and structural racism. This year, we saw even deeper analysis and interrogation on what it might take to address the different levels of racism and how much they are interconnected. At the same time, staff felt the tools they have for addressing racism within the organization are insufficient.”*

(source:<https://www.livingcities.org/resources/372-internal-scan-2020-racial-equity-and-inclusion-competency-survey-results>)

### 3. Public Safety

- A. **It is recommended that the Keene Police Department continue its CALEA accreditation and continue to publicize what is required for the CALEA accreditation as well as its most recent assessment report.** CALEA accreditation is voluntary, and in August of 2020 the KPD was one of just fifteen NH law enforcement agencies with this accreditation, which it has held since 2009. It requires a lengthy annual review and regular audit of policies, procedures and records for the ultimate purpose of fairness in the application of justice. Among the many practices carefully reviewed by CALEA are hiring processes and use of authority and force, for example.

The Committee’s efforts involved a general overview of KPD reports, training practices, use of force and other policies. The City Council and public are encouraged to visit the KPD website, “About” and “Resources” pages which include detailed information about training required by the KPD and its most recent CALEA assessment report which provide in-depth information including recent data and activities. The Committee found this information to be helpful in its review.

- B. **It is recommended that the KPD and other local law enforcement and first responder agencies engage external resources to conduct a review of recruitment and job application processes to identify and correct any possible bias that may limit applications from or the advancement of black people, indigenous people, and people of color.** Diversity in law enforcement personnel is essential for effective law enforcement and for community relations. Chief Russo made it clear that the Keene Police Department is actively seeking applicants, and racial diversity is desired, but a shortage of applicants in general continues to be a challenge in law enforcement in and well beyond the Monadnock region. In addition to the CALEA accreditation process which includes a thorough review of hiring practices, there is an opportunity to look more closely at the recruitment and skills testing processes used by the KPD and other local law enforcement and first responder agencies to attract a diverse workforce. There may be opportunities to reach a more diverse applicant pool, to improve the message of racial equity and inclusion within recruitment programs, and to post job openings with services that have a more diverse following. It is also recommended that the Keene Police Department review and update its recruitment video with these goals in mind.
- C. **It is recommended that the KPD provide public education on what methods are trained and used by the KPD to limit any necessary response to what is reasonable within various circumstances.** Committee discussions included a review with the KPD of what is commonly referred to as “use of force”. There were questions about what is legal and what is not, what is considered reasonable response to resistance and what is not, how KPD personnel are trained to respond in various circumstances, and how data regarding incidents involving use of force is recorded. It became clear in these discussions that the KPD has specific and ongoing training, review and reporting requirements regarding its response to resistance activities and policies that the public is not

generally aware of, and that could aid in improving public knowledge of KPD practices.

- D. **It is recommended that the City Council support the need for more community mental health services and any opportunities to assist the KPD in its response to emergencies requiring these services.** This recommendation is specifically focused on community safety and addresses the concern that some emergencies that involve psychological or behavioral crises have the best possible outcome for all involved when assisted by or managed by mental health professionals.

The Committee considered mobile crisis intervention services that could possibly provide immediate stabilization in cases of psychological or behavioral crisis. These types of services, however, do not transfer the responsibility of response from law enforcement to the mobile crisis resources because, in times of emergency, the dispatching of services must be immediate and, thus, cannot include a level of questioning or decision making required to determine whether mental health services might be needed. The immediate dispatch of law enforcement response continues to be required to meet public safety requirements and expectations. The potential promise of fewer crises if there are more community mental health resources, however, is a good reason to support any increase in these services to our community.

- E. **It is recommended that the KPD continue to engage the services of organizations such as the Veteran and First Responder Healthcare organization to support the needs of KPD personnel.** First responder jobs come with high risk, big expectations and nontraditional work hours. Recognition of stress response and engaging support services when needed is important for first responder health which is directly related to job performance and community relations.
- F. **It is recommended that the KPD continue to engage directly with Keene youth and families to maintain and build upon community relations and acceptance.** The KPD has a great track record with programs such as the Police Athletic League (PAL), for example, which helps children in the community build relationships with and see the human side of Keene's law enforcement personnel. The very visible reporting of nationwide incidents of racism including law enforcement makes it incredibly important now to build and maintain a positive rapport between the KPD and Keene children and families. It is understood that the COVID-19 pandemic limits these types of opportunities, but, even in this difficult and unusual time, the KPD can use creative ways (such as a pen pal program, for example) to proactively connect with Keene youth and families and is to be commended for their efforts thus far.

#### 4. City and Community

The path to racial equity in the Keene community will require organizational change, and it will require leaders amongst Keene's employers to serve as catalysts for change. The goal is to create and use a racial equity lens and implement a community process to empower businesses to advance diversity and inclusion. The following recommendations are intended both for the City of Keene as well as all Keene businesses. Many of these actions will require the assistance of experienced diversity and inclusion consultants.

- A. **It is recommended that the City assign an administrative role within the City government moving forward the mission of diversity, equity and inclusion set forth by this Committee.**

- B. **It is recommended that the City and Keene employers regularly conduct diversity, equity and inclusion training for employees that fosters an open and welcoming workplace culture for all people.**
- C. **It is recommended that the City and Keene employers review employee recruitment, retention, pay and promotion policies to achieve improved diversity and equity amongst applicants and throughout organizational personnel at all levels.**
- D. **It is recommended that the City and Keene employers expand and regularly provide internship positions that specifically attract underrepresented populations and create career opportunities.**
- E. **It is recommended that the City and Keene employers identify where skills are transferable amongst potential applicants to help provide opportunities and widen the applicant pool (military to law enforcement, for example).**
- F. **It is recommended that the City and Keene employers update traditional skills testing procedures that may unnecessarily disqualify black, indigenous and people of color and that the parameters of applicant tracking systems be broadened.**
- G. **It is recommended that the City and Keene employers seek and generate incentives to promote equity in employment.**
- H. **It is recommended that the City and Keene employers review and update initiatives, systems, operations and mission statements to identify practices that limit or thwart diversity.**
- I. **It is recommended that the City intentionally factor diversity into community driven development projects such as the arts corridor and the skate park, for example.**
- J. **It is recommended that the Keene Public Library as well as school libraries expand collection diversity, that feedback be sought from the community for this purpose, that the Keene Public Library facilitate reading groups to promote diversity within its collection, and that libraries seek financial donations to help expand the collection diversity.**
- K. **It is recommended that the City review Cheshire TV programming and encourage additions and changes that promote diversity and inclusion.**

## 5. Education

Building and appreciating racial diversity in ways that create real opportunities and promote long term community success starts with youth and, therefore, must involve Keene's schools. This will be a very effective driver for long term positive outcomes in racial equity in the Keene community. It is understood that the City of Keene does not govern Keene public school policy, however, racial equity and community safety throughout our city will require efforts outside of City Hall.

The following recommendations are made as a reflection of comments and concerns received by the public for the consideration of Keene school leadership, and the City Council is respectfully asked to support these recommendations upon any opportunity to do so. The Committee appreciates the participation of Keene School Board members and SAU29 Superintendent of Schools, Robert Malay, in the discussions had on this topic.

- A. **It is recommended that Keene schools develop specific anti-racism policies and appeal to the State of New Hampshire to establish a standard anti-racism policy as a baseline for all schools.** The Committee heard concerns from the public that the current general anti-discrimination and anti-bullying policies in Keene schools are not sufficient in handling situations of racism. The use of racial slurs and other types of racist behavior call for a clear and specific response that sends a message of zero tolerance, tends to the needs of the victims and helps to break down implicit bias. The reports of racist behaviors and the fear and hesitation that victims and victims' parents have to report incidents give credence to the need for specific anti-racism policy and practice.
- B. **It is recommended that Keene schools review discipline data regularly and address systemic issues of racial inequality.** The purpose of this recommendation is to take a proactive approach to address inequalities in schools at all levels rather than a response-oriented approach. Superintendent Malay reported that a new model at the Keene High School includes a Dean of Students position that oversees all student discipline that will help make progress in this direction at that particular school.
- C. **It is recommended that Keene schools facilitate and maintain recurring student forums for student input and conversations about racial equity and inclusion at all levels.** Much like public input is key to achieving racial equity and inclusion in the greater community, student input is key to making progress in this direction within the schools. The intent is to provide a safe and welcoming means to build awareness of the problems that exist and to reveal and correct implicit bias in the school system.
- D. **It is recommended that Keene schools conduct regular, anonymous equity and inclusivity climate surveys and youth risk behavior surveys.** Parents and students of Keene schools represent a significant portion of Keene's population. This provides the schools with an opportunity to use annual surveys to measure racial equity and inclusivity awareness and experience and to implement programs to affect positive change.
- E. **It is recommended that schools thoroughly review special education, food security and other student and family assistance programs to determine where racial bias exists and make efforts to correct it.**
- F. **It is recommended that Keene schools review all curricula with a lens of racial equity and change or replace curricula as necessary to eliminate bias and help ensure all students feel respected and included.** This is an issue that came to light during Committee meetings and public forums where it was made clear that students of color have found themselves in uncomfortable situations due to biased or inadequate texts and topics. The National Education Association conducted an initiative to eradicate institutional racism in public schools and provides helpful information and resources to help with this type of effort. Superintendent Malay suggested Social Studies content as a good example of material that needs updating to eliminate bias that has been otherwise overlooked to date.
- G. **It is recommended that Keene schools ensure equity in the education system by promoting diversity amongst faculty including concerted outreach to organizations and institutions where diversity exists.** Having teachers of color can help schools improve curricula selection, mentor all students and challenge implicit bias. The opportunity exists to review position descriptions, postings and recruitment practices, remove any inherent bias and adjust as necessary to appeal to a more diverse pool of candidates to the extent possible. It is understood, however, that faculty diversity is stagnant nationwide – Keene is not alone.

- H. **It is recommended that Keene schools conduct social equity and justice training for teachers and implement culturally responsive pedagogy.** The Committee heard from a local teacher who noted that the use of common social innuendos, stereotypes and practices of assimilation occurs in schools, and that there are training programs available to help teachers recognize and adjust these practices. The goal is a comfortable and enriching academic experience for students of all races.
  
- I. **Additional creative programs and approaches in schools that promote awareness and support of diversity and inclusion are encouraged,** such as international pen pal programs with local elementary students, for example.

## CONCLUSION

“The whole of us is affected when the least of us is affected.” (*Gail Somers, Keene Resident*) The specific number of complaints received does not reflect the impact or severity of the problem – this is one of the challenges. Our City has limited diversity to begin with, and that fact means we may not get mass complaints. This does not make the reality of racism in Keene insignificant or unimportant. Ultimately, the goal is to “build a community that is safe, just and accessible to all through ongoing community and government commitment that is codified, measurable and accountable in and for every single member of our community. This puts forward the values we believe in.” (*Pierre Morton, proud member of the Keene community*)

The Racial Justice and Community Safety Committee presents this report to the City Council with both sincere concern and optimism. Keene is a beautiful and safe community, but the existence of racism and implicit bias cannot be denied. It is important that the City assume a leadership role in affecting change that builds racial equity and inclusion. Committee members agreed that there is much work to do, and it is difficult to stop meeting because there are many opportunities for further examination in addition to positive community energy on this topic, however, in the important interest of making an immediate impact, these recommendations are advanced. The continuation of this process with community involvement and to include ongoing examination, dialogue, measurement and change will be key to long term movement in improving racial justice and community safety for Keene.

